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Two Merry Wagers

A FARCE

By

Edna Randolph Worrell

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Characters.

Maude Warren, a society girl (modish morning gown).

Grace Gay, friend to Maude (street costume).

James Craig Montgomery, man about town (top boots, riding breeches, short coat).

Bridget, Irish servant (black dress, white cap and apron).

TWO MERRY WAGERS

A Farce

BY

EDNA RANDOLPH WORRELL

Scene.—*Breakfast room in the Warren household. Table and two chairs center. Two other chairs should be placed well front to extreme right and left of stage. Exits, center and left.*

Time.—*Morning.*

(Curtain rises on Bridget polishing glasses on table. She glances at clock before speaking.)

Bridget. Tin o'clock and Miss Maude not up yet! Sure it must be grand to be a young lady niver puttin' a foot to the floor till it's toime to dress for a party! She wint to six parties yistiddy and the loikes of thim I niver heard. First she went to a five-hundred party. Moind the size of that now! Thin she wint to a lunch party. (Bridget stops to check number off on fingers.) Thin there was a box-party at the the-ay-ter, which makes me roar with laughter to think of Miss Maude settin' on a box when she could have a whole row of iligant vilvet chairs if she wanted thim! Thin she wint to a tango tay party. That's a brand I niver tasted, and

I'm over fond of tay! I'll be askin' Mis' Warren to order a pound the nixt toime she phones to the store. After that she wint to a dinner party and thin I heard her say she she mit somebody at a bridge; a quare place for a young lady to be goin' at noight, I'm thinkin'! I'm glad she didn't mate me and Pat there! (Bell rings.) That's letters. (Goes to door [center] and takes mail from box, sorts and reads addresses aloud.) Miss Maude Warren, Miss Warren, Miss Maude, Miss Maude, Miss Warren, all for Miss Maude—and from gintlemen, I'll be bound! (Sighs heavily. She then places the letters one by one on the table, examining them as she continues her monologue.) That writin' looks loike the tall thin gintleman; and this is loike the short fat one; and that's from the doctor, bold as ye plase with his name in the corner! This one is iligant enough for the gintleman with the diamond scarf pin, and this looks as much loike the red-headed gintleman as writin' could look loike a head o' hair. They're all crazy about her, too; one just as much as the other, but it's me private opinion publicly exprissed that she doesn't care a turn of her pretty little head for any of thim. (She drops a letter.) They *do* say that droppin' a letter manes a widdin to the house, but I'll bet myself a foine new bonnet that the groom won't be any of thim that hangs around now, he'll be somebody different entirely.

(Enter Maude, left.)

Maude. Good morning, Bridget! Did I hear you talking to any one?

Bridget. Good morning, Miss! No, Miss! I was only remarkin' to meself that I'd be buyin' meself a foine new bonnet one of these days. What will ye have for breakfast, Miss?

Maude. Nothing much, just half a grapefruit and some coffee. (Maude seats herself back of table, facing audience. Bridget places fruit in front of Maude and exits left.)

Maude (continuing). What a lot of mail! (She opens letters one by one, reading them aloud. Letters should be written out and numbered to be taken up in proper order.)

"*My dear Miss Maude*—Accept the heartiest congratulations and best wishes of your old friend. JACK."

What on earth does he mean! He must think it's my birthday!

"Mr John Foster Earle—

"As years about your life entwine,
May happiness be ever thine."

That sounds like a birthday card, too. Isn't it funny! I wonder if there are any more like these.

"*Dear Maude*—I have just heard the happy news. May I call and give you my best wishes in person? Phone me that I may come, provided, of course, that I do not make a crowd. Three is not company, you know.

Cordially, BILLY."

Well I never! Isn't this too comical! "The plot thickens," as they say in melodrama; some-

body surely is playing a joke. Here's a letter from Dr. Harrington, maybe he'll enlighten me.

"*My Dear Miss Warren*—You have certainly stolen a march on us all. How did you ever manage it? I'm all broken up about it, but I suppose I'll have to accept it the same as the other fellows. Forgive me if I am saying too much and be assured that I hope everything is for the best."

Mercy! There is no birthday greeting about *that*, it sounds more like a condolence. I wonder what I have done. Maybe I've been walking in my sleep and eloped—or something.

(Enter Bridget with box.)

Bridget. A messenger just brought this, Miss.

Maude (opening box). Roses! How lovely! I wonder who sent them. (Searches for card.) Why, there is no card. Did the boy say who sent them?

Bridget. No, Miss; nary a name did he spake but your own.

Maude. No matter. Fix them prettily in a vase for me. That's a good girl. (Exit Bridget with flowers. Maude continues thoughtfully.) Those flowers are part of the joke. Here is a letter in a strange hand; maybe this will enlighten me.

"*My Dear Young Friend*—May an old comrade of your father's send congratulations to the daughter whom he has never seen? I have just learned of your brilliant prospects and I hasten to express my satisfaction at your good fortune. Give my regards to your father, my compliments

to your mother, and believe me, my dear Miss Warren, to be your most obedient servant.

CASPAR OGDEN."

That's no joke, anyhow. I wonder what it all means. I'm beginning to feel dizzy.

(Enter Grace Gay from the back center, putting hands over Maude's eyes.)

Grace. Guess!

Maude. I know, Grace Gay; no one but you would think of scaring a body to death before breakfast. Sit down, dear. (Grace takes other chair at table.) I am awfully glad to see you. I have about a million questions I want to ask.

Grace. And *I'm* crazy to see *you.* I came the first minute I could get away. I want you to tell me all about it.

Maude. All about what?

Grace. Miss Innocence!

Maude. What do you mean?

Grace. What—do—I—mean! Well, that is a good one, when you have taken the whole town into your confidence. I always considered myself your most intimate friend, and expected to be your bridesmaid, but I see I'm to be left out!

Maude. Indeed, Grace, I don't know what you are talking about. Won't you stop your teasing?

Grace. You're the one that's teasing.

Maude. Truly I'm not. I'm almost distracted trying to understand a lot of letters that came this morning. Somebody is playing a practical joke on me and you are evidently in the secret. I think you're real mean. (Wipes eyes.)

Grace. Why, Maude, I'm as serious as a dictionary.

Maude. Well, somebody is joking anyhow; read that, and that, and that, and that. (Throws letters in Grace's lap. Grace reads to herself.)

Grace. Do you really mean to say you don't know?

Maude (tearfully). No—I—don't!

Grace. Why, they are about your engagement, of course.

Maude. My *engagement!*

Grace. Yes. Aren't you?

Maude. Engaged? No! To whom? When? Where?

Grace. Didn't you see last evening's paper?

Maude. I only read the fashions and the jokes. Why?

Grace. I'll tell you in a minute. (Produces clipping from bag.) I saved this clipping. Listen. "The engagement of Miss Maude Warren, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry C. Warren, to Mr. James Craig Montgomery is announced."

Maude. Oh!. Oh! Oh! Isn't that awful!

Grace. Then it really isn't true?

Maude. No! No! Of course it's not!

Grace. I don't know why it's—"of course," he's rich and good looking, with a whole regiment of ancestors.

Maude. Why, I don't *know* him. I never *met* him. I never even *saw* him, except when we passed on horseback in the park. But, oh Grace, (dreamily) I couldn't help noticing how beautifully he rode, and his eyes are perfectly

lovely. I really think I could care for him if I had the chance—but, now—oh! oh! oh! What will he ever think of me! (Walks up and down in agitation.)

Grace. No doubt he's very much flattered to have been chosen by the belle of the town.

Maude. Oh, Grace, how can you! Besides, they say he's a woman hater. (Puts head on table and cries.)

Grace (leaning over her). Come, cheer up. It might be a great deal worse. Suppose you were engaged to a Hottentot.

Bridget (entering). A gintleman to see you, Miss; a brand new one! (Hands card to to Maude.)

Maude (reading card). James Craig Montgomery. Oh, Grace, he's here! (Jumps up and runs about table, Grace following her.) What shall I do? Where shall I go? How can I hide?

Grace. Don't get so excited.

Maude. I can't help it, I can never, never see him in the wide, wide world.

Bridget (wildly waving her apron). Sure, Miss, ye don't have to, I'll defind ye wid me loife!

Grace (to Maude). Oh yes, you can. (To Bridget). The gentleman isn't an ogre, Bridget. I don't think you'll come to blows.

Maude. I can't see him, I tell you, I can't! I'd simply die!

Grace. Not while you're looking as healthy as you do now. You're making as much fuss as if you'd seen a mouse. Just stay and face the

music. Here! (Gives Maude powder-puff and glass from vanity bag.)

Maude (catching her breath and dabbing her nose with the puff). I—suppose—it—is—best.

Grace. Shall I stay and hold your hand?

Maude. No, dear; I think I can get along better with him alone; but don't go far, I might need you. Show the gentleman in, Bridget.

Bridget. Yes, Miss, and don't be afraid. Just scrame and I'll come a runnin'. (Exit Grace left and Bridget center. Enter Montgomery center. They bow.)

Montgomery. Miss Warren.

Maude. Mr. Montgomery.

(They bow again.)

Maude. Pray, be seated.

Montgomery. Thank you. (He bows again and waits till Maude has seated herself on chair to left of platform. He then takes the one to right.)

Maude (after pause during which both glance at each other, then turn away). May I know to what circumstance I am indebted for this call?

Montgomery. Certainly, certainly. I was about to explain. I hope you will pardon me for coming at so early an hour but—

Maude. But what, Mr. Montgomery?

Montgomery. The fact is, Miss Warren, I came on rather a peculiar errand.

Maude. Indeed?

Montgomery. Yes, yes, a very peculiar errand. I might say an extraordinary errand. (Silence. Pantomime of glances repeated.)

Maude (after pause). Proceed.

Montgomery. Yes, yes, certainly. I was about to do so, er—ah—I never call on young ladies.

Maude. So I would suppose.

Montgomery. Miss Warren, you are cruel.

Maude. The suspense you are keeping me in is still more so.

Montgomery. True, true, pardon me again; but the matter is a very delicate one. Um—er—ah—may I ask if you saw, ah, my name coupled with yours in last evening's paper?

Maude. I was informed of such a notice this morning. Can you explain it? (Icily.)

Montgomery. That is what I came to do, though I was as much surprised as you at the announcement. As I said before, I never call on young ladies. Please do not think strangely of me for making that remark, but I have always held them in such high regard that I never cared to visit any of them until I saw one that I thought I could make my wife.

Maude (aside). Then he isn't a woman hater after all.

(Silence, while chairs are drawn closer.)

Montgomery. To continue, some friends of mine, for a joke, bet that they could make me call on any girl they might select. I took the bet, feeling sure I would win. They invented this unusual way of bringing me to you, and it is they who have won, as I am here to make amends as best I may. Will you forgive me for the unwit-

ting part I have taken in this unfortunate affair? (Draws his chair nearer to Maude's.)

Maude (doing same). Indeed, I *do* forgive you, Mr. Montgomery; you may say we are fellow sufferers.

Montgomery. *I* am not a sufferer, Miss Warren; I am deeply grateful for any circumstances that could have brought us together.

Maude. You are very kind.

Montgomery. I have always longed to meet you.

Maude. Oh, Mr. Montgomery!

(Chairs are now quite close.)

Montgomery. Won't you tell me what I can do in this matter?

Maude (turning head away). I suppose the proper thing to do is—to break—our—engagement.

Montgomery. As you like, Miss Warren; but why not be engaged for a while on trial? We have often seen each other in the park and I fancied when our glances met that your look was not unkindly. Am I right?

Maude (faintly). Yes.

Montgomery. And so, since I am not distasteful to you, could we not let the announcement stand, to the world at least, and then—if you could care—as—I—do now—no one need ever know that we were not. Shall we?

Maude. This is so sudden. (Gives him both her hands.)

Montgomery. Then I have lost a bet but won a wife. (Montgomery starts to take her in his

arms when Bridget enters hastily with flowers in hand.)

Bridget. Beg pardon for interruptin', but there is nary a vase in the house big enough for this bunch. (In loud whisper to Maude). Do ye nade any assistance, Miss?

Maude (laughing). No, Bridget. Go call Miss Grace.

Montgomery (taking flowers from Bridget, who exits left). These are my peace offering—to my bride-to-be.

Maude. Did you send them? I didn't know. They are perfect—like our romance. (Enter Grace and Bridget. Maude embraces Grace.) Oh, Grace, just think, dear, you are to be my bridesmaid after all. Allow me to introduce my future husband, Mr. Montgomery. Mr. Montgomery, Miss Gay. (They bow.)

Bridget. Excuse me. But I'd loike to have an hour off, Miss, to buy meself a foine new bonnet. (Maude and Montgomery center, Grace left, Bridget right.)

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